

THE CREEPING KUDZU OF COMPROMISE

Reprinted August 11, 2009 (first published February 14, 1998) (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) -

The following discerning message by Jack Stephens is from the Ohio Bible Fellowship (OBF) *Visitor* (3865 North High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43214-3797, 614-262-2006). We do not agree with the OBF in some matters, church polity and the Bible text issue among others, but we do appreciate their willingness to take a bold and unpopular stand against the all-pervasive new evangelical spirit. Pastor Stephens demonstrates a clear understanding of a damnable phenomenon that is occurring widely among fundamentalist churches, including fundamental Baptists.

THE CREEPING KUDZU OF COMPROMISE

By Jack Stephens

A few decades ago, an Oriental creeping vine called "kudzu" was introduced into the Southeast of our country for the purpose of providing ground cover and erosion control. Any Southerner can tell you the result. This vine gradually encroached on the land and, where it was not constantly kept in check, it choked out all other plant life, climbing utility poles and following the connecting lines to span roadways and other obstacles in its steady onslaught to take over every inch of available land. In short, from its innocent beginnings, it has become a bane and a pest to the land.

In much the same way, compromise seeks to infiltrate and take over the local church and its work. Its beginnings always seem small and innocuous, but it stifles the true work of the Spirit in God's people and smothers the Gospel in the twisting vines of a weak, watered-down, worldly message. This never happens as a sudden diversion into error, since such a move would be too obvious and the church would react against it. Jude warns us to "contend for the faith" because "certain men" have "crept in unawares." Like kudzu, their entry is very gradual, even imperceptible to the undiscerning eye. And the organism into which they are creeping is the church, right in among the saints. They are able to get in because they are accepted. They are well liked, well thought of, and seemingly genuine, all the while leading the church deeper into the choking grasp of compromise with the world and ecumenism.

How does this happen? What should the saints be looking for in order to guard against this pervading philosophy? Are there early signs of the grasping tendrils of compromise in the organizations succumbing to its dominance? Consider with me some ways the creeping kudzu of compromise may enter a church or organization.

DISCONTENT

Eve was confronted by someone who was intent on fomenting rebellion in her heart. She already had within her the seeds of that rebellion. It took a catalyst to bring it out, to egg her on, and that catalyst came in the form of one who caused her to be discontent with her position. He sought to get her outside her God-ordained "comfort zone." It is one thing to shake someone from complacency to do what they ought to do. It is quite another thing to seek to stir up discontent for other reasons. The "kudzu" man may try to influence the church away from a militant fundamental stand on the basis of its being too negative, too confining, too unloving, or simply not progressive enough for the age in which we live. He may fabricate a crisis in the church and blame it on fundamentalism. He may claim that if we don't change our narrow-minded ways and loosen up a bit, we are doomed. If you fall for that line, you have let the roots of compromise settle in already.

DISPLACEMENT

If a "kudzu" man gets into a place of leadership you can count on a gradual replacement of solid, proven men around him with less militant, more moldable men. You may see him begin to remove the older men from leadership as he waits for them to pass off the scene. He wants newer men, whom he has indoctrinated with his kinder, gentler way of ministry, to come in.

If you are part of the older generation of saints, don't give in to this ploy. You are the watchdogs of the faith. Stay sharp. Stay vigilant. Stay involved, and stay vocal. Covenant in your heart that, as God gives you wisdom and opportunity, you will permit no one to take your church from its separatist stand.

UNCHECKED ENDORSEMENTS

If you hear a man endorsing liberals, new evangelicals, or even secular unbelievers in regard to theological matters with no disclaimers about them, look for the twining vine. A man may sometimes quote from one of these sources by way of illustration, but to do so without clarifying the dangers or errors in them is to open the way to misleading the flock. And why quote from a questionable source when a sound person's words will do? Additionally, if a man endorses worldly views, entertainment, or the "pop culture" in the interest of "relating" to the lost, get out the hoe. The average Christian is more aware than he or she needs to be of the world's culture and current events. We need no encouragement to dwell on them or partake of them, whether vicariously or actually.

FAULTING THE FAITHFUL

If a man finds fault with faithful fundamental men and claims that they go too far in regard to biblical separation, he is in the shadow of new evangelicalism. The ruse may take the form of a declaration that the men being criticized are too narrow and that the fault-finder is the true Champion of The Cause. Any man who thinks a holy purity in position for the Gospel should be balanced against a pragmatic viewpoint is leading his people down the path to compromise.

Similarly, beware of the man who breaks fellowship with sound separatist brethren on the supposed basis of "other issues." He may claim, "We stand in the same place doctrinally, but our disagreements are on other non-doctrinal or secondary issues." If I were you, I would press the man for specific, clear details of exactly what issues are at stake. Cut into him here and you may find him bleeding the green ooze of new evangelicalism.

INTELLECTUAL PRIDE

There is nothing wrong with a pastor who is well-read and has a broad range of knowledge. It only becomes a problem when he desires to sound intellectual instead of practical in his messages. He wants everyone to know just how intelligent he is. His next step may be to desire wider recognition of his talents, and this will often lead to entanglement with those in the new evangelical orbit. We need great minds in fundamental Christianity, but we need practical application of the Word and biblical humility even more.

PROMOTING WEAK SCHOOLS

During my teen years in my home town, the demise of a group of fundamental churches was evidenced by the promotion of weak schools. The young people of these churches went to places like Moody, Wheaton, and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and spoke with great disdain about places like Bob Jones and other militant schools. That generation was responsible for the final erosion of whatever separatist testimony there had been in that fellowship. Observe what schools a man or organization promotes and supports and you will have a general indication of where he/it is headed.

A MUFFLED MESSAGE

Ezekiel 33 tells us of the necessity of the watchman blowing a clear message of warning. If the trumpet does not sound, woe to the people and to the watchman! If a man does not blow the trumpet of warning in his preaching or if the note blown is so soft it can't be discerned, you might just wonder if that man is really sincere about the alarm. When a man is afraid of offending those in error, when he lacks a definite biblical stand on issues, when he seems reluctant to warn of sin and compromise, and when he seems too kindly disposed toward those so involved, watch out. The strangling vine has silenced the clarion call.

If you notice a gradual decline in emphasis on truth and an increasing emphasis on love, perhaps stated as a need for balance between the two, look for the fatal flower of faulty doctrine. Scriptural love is always firmly rooted in and grows out of Truth. If there is a flaw in our love, it is because of a flaw in our stand in the Truth.

Likewise, note that it is impossible to tacitly stand for fundamentalism. One who says he stands for a separatist position but claims to do so without declaring it has already denied the position

by his silence. It is impossible to contend for something by silence. I remember churches who would not participate in Graham crusades but did not take the time to explain their reason and/or did not apply the principle to other issues. Those churches have long since left what moorings they had in a fundamentalist philosophy of ministry. The power of a pure church has left them.

CUNNING COUNSELORS

In J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, there is a character named Wormtongue who worked his way into position as confidante and advisor to King Theoden. His name says it all as his shrewd machinations led the king, who defended him at every turn, astray. There are men like Wormtongue who have crept into some churches, schools, and other organizations, corrupting the judgment of the very men who trust them most. It is tragic to see the apparent willful blindness of some leaders toward these traitors to the Cause. The leaders seem enamored of the brilliance, the charisma, the freshness of approach these capable men have. It is sad to see a trusted leader so dazed by his own "Wormtongue" that he will protect him and allow him to promote wrong, compromising programs and positions. The pruning shears are long overdue in such a situation, but they had better be used soon if the scourge is to be stopped.

WORLDLY WEEDS

We have heard much in recent years about the encroachment of the world into Christian music. Great seminars and powerful books have been submitted to warn and inform us of the dangers of the wrong elements in our music. Why, then, are so many churches, Christian schools and colleges giving in to the worldly sound? There may not be one simple answer, but the general problem and responsibility for it lies in the silence of those who know better. One difference between literal sheep and spiritual sheep is that spiritual sheep have a choice. We do not have to follow if the shepherd is going the wrong way. Sheep, use your mouth to tear up the kudzu and spit it out. It may be distasteful, but it is necessary.

LYING LIPS

In the political realm there are men called "spin doctors" who are highly paid to slant the facts (i.e., to lie) to make their position look good, even when those facts in themselves are contrary to their position. When you find a man lying to support his position, watch out! This is not the action of a spiritual man of integrity. When a man has to lie to justify his actions or position, you can count on him being wrong. He is trying to lead you into error. It is time to get out the weed killer and stop the lying kudzu of compromise.

DON'T GROW WEARY

I have worked in a garden enough to know that pulling weeds is an unpleasant, tiring, continual task; but it is necessary for a healthy, productive garden. Weeds will never stop popping up.

Kudzu is relentless. And you can expect the same type of thing in your baffle for the Faith. The "kudzu" man who succeeds in creeping into the church will not appear as an unbeliever or apostate. He will be intelligent, a good preacher, a personable, capable, nice guy with a warm smile and a hearty handshake. It will take discernment to weed him out from among the true friends of the Faith. If you cross him, you can expect opposition, conflict, even lies about you and your motives. But you must cross him if you are going to contend for the Faith once delivered to the saints. Don't let "kudzu" overrun you and your church!

Distributed by Way of Life Literature's Fundamental Baptist Information Service, an e-mail listing for Fundamental Baptists and other fundamentalist, Bible-believing Christians. OUR GOAL IN THIS PARTICULAR ASPECT OF OUR MINISTRY IS NOT DEVOTIONAL BUT IS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO ASSIST PREACHERS IN THE PROTECTION OF THE CHURCHES IN THIS APOSTATE HOUR. This material is sent only to those who personally subscribe to the list. If somehow you have subscribed unintentionally, following are the instructions for removal. The Fundamental Baptist Information Service mailing list is automated. To SUBSCRIBE, go to <http://www.wayoflife.org/wayoflife/subscribe.html> . TO UNSUBSCRIBE OR CHANGE ADDRESSES, go to the very bottom of any email received from us and click "Manage My Subscription." If you have any trouble with this, please let us know. We take up a quarterly offering to fund this ministry, and those who use the materials are expected to participate (Galatians 6:6) if they can. Some of the articles are from O Timothy magazine, which is in its 26th year of publication. Way of Life publishes many helpful books. The catalog is located at the web site: <http://www.wayoflife.org/publications/index.html>. Way of Life Literature, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061. 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org. We do not solicit funds from those who do not agree with our preaching and who are not helped by these publications, but only from those who are. OFFERINGS can be made at <http://www.wayoflife.org/wayoflife/makeanoffering.html>. PAYPAL offerings can be made to <https://www.paypal.com/xclick/business=dcloud%40wayoflife.org>

WAY OF LIFE LITERATURE SHARING POLICY: Much of our material is available for free, such as the hundreds of articles at the Way of Life web site. Other items we sell to help fund our very expensive literature, video, and foreign church planting ministry. Way of Life's content falls into two categories: sharable and non-sharable. Things that we encourage you to share include the audio sermons, video presentations, O Timothy magazine, and FBIS articles. You are free to make copies of these at your own expense and share them with friends and family. Things we do not want copied and distributed freely are items like the Fundamental Baptist Digital Library, print edition of our books, PDFs of the books, etc. These items have taken years to produce at enormous expense in time and money, and we need the income from the sale of these to help fund the ministry. We trust that your Christian honesty will preserve the integrity of this policy.